

# LEED green building system evolves

By Marsha Leed

Research shows that buildings are one of the largest consumers of natural resources and account for a significant portion of the greenhouse gas emissions that affect climate change. In the United States, buildings account for almost 40 percent of all carbon emissions and more than 70 percent of electricity use. Green buildings are designed to consume less energy and natural resources, and can often have lower maintenance costs. A properly designed building can also be a healthier, more inviting place to live or work,



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with improved indoor air quality and increased natural light.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system was developed in 2000 by the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council to promote sustainability and to serve as a framework for identifying and measuring "green" design and construction. Since then, the green building industry has experienced substantial growth. Many products and techniques that were once considered cutting edge are now standard practices.

The Green Building Council will introduce the newest rating system, LEED v4, in November. The same four levels of certification are maintained — Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum — based



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on a 100-point system for design and construction elements. LEED v4 now focuses on increasing technical stringency from past versions and is introducing new requirements for a wider variety of project types. A new credit is for "integrative process," which encourages early analysis of energy, site and water systems to inform the project design.

The Green Building Council prides itself on the continuous improvement of the LEED rating system over the past 13 years. LEED v4 includes complete rating systems for building design and construction, building operations and maintenance, interior design and construction, and neighborhood development. Projects seeking LEED certification register with the Green Building Council and achieve point credits in the following categories: location and transportation, sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Third-party verification during the review process

ensures that projects are designed, built and operated as intended, with support offered through the Green Building Council. The LEED green building rating system has been used in all 50 states and in more than 135 countries around the world.

Setting goals and strategies at the very beginning of a project will ensure success. LEED addresses the entire life cycle of a building, as well as its relationship to site elements. Building reuse and recycling are encouraged, and an emphasis is put on conserving natural resources.

New York has been one of the leaders in adopting policies to promote sustainability and green building practices. Our state ranks third in the nation for the total number of commercial buildings that are LEED-certified. Many local governments in the state are also promoting the use of the LEED rating system for municipal and commercial buildings.

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### GREEN BUILDING SNAPSHOT 2013

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